

EPA Region III

Office of Public Affairs

EARLY BIRD HEADLINES

Friday, August 31, 2012

*** MORNING HOT LIST ***

Overhauled permit rules would streamline review process

PITTSBURGH POST GAZETTE HARRISBURG -- Revamped permitting guidelines released Thursday by state environmental regulators propose to make the review process more efficient and outline several criteria for how applications may rise to the top of the pile. The potential changes are the result of an executive order issued last month, which directed the state Department of Environmental Protection to overhaul its rules for issuing permits related to areas such as erosion and sedimentation control, oil and gas operations and water and air quality. An earlier "money-back guarantee" on permits that exceed their review timetables was revoked. Instead, the 26-page document states, any permit lacking the necessary materials would be denied. Those with the proper paperwork, but later deemed incomplete in some way, would be returned for more work and the agency's guarantee of review within a certain time period would be voided. Permit applications would not necessarily be reviewed in the order they are received. Those with environmental or public safety impacts would be a priority, as would those that provide significant economic benefits. Agency spokesman Kevin Sunday said the Governor's Action Team, which is involved in economic development efforts, could play a role in determining the job figures related to a project. He added that the agency is seeking feedback on that section in particular. The changes would streamline the review process for more than 240 different agency permits. Public comments will be accepted until Oct. 1, after which the agency will post its final rules. While the permit guidelines cover a wide swath of activities, the natural gas drilling industry has been particularly vocal about what it feels is a sluggish process. In a statement, Marcellus Shale Coalition president Kathryn Klaber referred to the proposed revisions as "common-sense efforts" and said they could help ensure that the state remains competitive. One environmental advocate who had been critical following the July executive order on the permitting changes, George Jugovic of PennFuture, said he had not yet reviewed the agency proposal late Thursday afternoon.

USGS Says Nutrient-Laden Sediment Behind Susquehanna Dams Threatens Restoration

BNA DAILY ENVIRONMENT REPORT Efforts to restore the Chesapeake Bay by 2025 face a major threat from nutrient-rich sediment that is building up behind three dams on the Susquehanna River, just above the bay, according to an Aug. 30 study by the U.S. Geological Survey. The three reservoirs are nearing capacity, and the dams' ability to trap sediment appears to be eroding. As a result, large storms are delivering increasingly more suspended sediment and nutrients to the bay, USGS said in announcing the study. The Environmental Protection Agency, other federal agencies, and the six states sharing the 41 million-acre Chesapeake Bay watershed are striving to cut nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment loading to sustainable levels, under a mandatory plan established in late 2010 (249 DEN A-4, 12/30/10). "The upstream reservoirs have served

previously to help reduce nutrient pollutant loads to the Chesapeake Bay by trapping sediment and the pollutants attached to them behind dams,” USGS Director Marcia McNutt said in a statement.

However, the reservoirs are now nearing their capacity to contain the sediment and have become much less effective at preventing nutrient-rich sediments from reaching the bay, McNutt said. “Further progress in meeting the goals for improving water quality in the Chesapeake will be more difficult to achieve as a result.”

GOP platform highlights the party's drastic shift on energy, climate issues

WASHINGTON POST Over the past four years, the Republican Party has undergone a fairly dramatic shift in its approach to energy and environmental issues. Global warming has disappeared entirely from the party’s list of concerns. Clean energy has become an afterthought. Fossil fuels loom larger than ever. And one way to see this shift clearly is to compare the party’s 2008 and 2012 platforms. It may seem difficult to believe now, but back in 2008, the Republican Party’s [platform](#) (pdf) had a long and detailed section on “Addressing Climate Change Responsibly.” Here’s how it opened:

The same human economic activity that has brought freedom and opportunity to billions has also increased the amount of carbon in the atmosphere. While the scope and longterm consequences of this are the subject of ongoing scientific research, common sense dictates that the United States should take measured and reasonable steps today to reduce any impact on the environment. Those steps, if consistent with our global competitiveness will also be good for our national security, our energy independence, and our economy. The 2008 platform went on to call for “technology-driven, market-based solutions that will decrease emissions, reduce excess greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, increase energy efficiency, mitigate the impact of climate change where it occurs, and maximize any ancillary benefits climate change might offer for the economy.”... Skip ahead to 2012, and the GOP platform takes a markedly different tone. That section devoted to climate change? Gone. Instead, the platform flatly opposes “any and all cap and trade legislation” to curtail greenhouse gases. It demands that Congress “take quick action to prohibit the EPA from moving forward with new greenhouse gas regulations.” It criticizes the Obama administration’s National Security Strategy for “elevat[ing] ‘climate change’ to the level of a ‘severe threat’ equivalent to foreign aggression.” The platform even tosses in what appears to be a subtle swipe at climate scientists: Moreover, the advance of science and technology advances environmentalism as well. Science allows us to weigh the costs and benefits of a policy so that we can prudently deal with our resources. This is especially important when the causes and long-range effects of a phenomenon are uncertain. We must restore scientific integrity to our public research institutions and remove political incentives from publicly funded research.

EPA releases permit allowing upgrades at century-old Capitol Power Plant

GREENWIRE A plan to overhaul the power plant that heats the Capitol took a step forward yesterday as U.S. EPA came out with a proposed permit that would encourage the use of natural gas at the 102-year-old facility. The Capitol Power Plant has not generated electricity in 60 years, but the Architect of the Capitol aims to change that by turning it into a cogeneration facility. Such a plant burns fuel for electricity and uses the leftover heat to keep buildings warm in the winter and cool in the summer, saving money and cutting pollution by reducing the amount of energy that goes to waste. The draft air pollution permit released yesterday would help clear the way for the project by relaxing some of the stricter permitting requirements at the plant. In exchange, the facility would be subject to “plantwide applicability limits” -- stricter caps on emissions of greenhouse gases, nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter. The project must still get other permits from the District Department of the Environment, but the approval shows the push by the administration to make greater use of natural gas and cogeneration, which is also called combined heat and power. Kathleen Cox, associate director of permits and air toxics at EPA's Region 3 office in Philadelphia, said the permit would theoretically allow the plant to burn either coal or natural gas, but using gas would allow the plant to run for more hours. “How they do that is up to them and up to the District,” she

said. The power plant, which stands just a few blocks away from the offices of congressmen, primarily burned coal in its seven boilers until 2009, when the office announced plans to switch to natural gas. With federal agencies under orders from the White House to trim their energy use and gas cheap thanks to the recent boom in domestic drilling, Architect of the Capitol Stephen Ayers has pushed further in that direction. Ayers has said that the cogeneration project will provide 18 megawatts of electricity while reducing the plant's energy use by 7.1 percent. It offers a "very cost-effective payback for Congress," he wrote this spring in the journal of the International District Energy Association, which represents companies that use combined heat and power.

EPA closes investigation into asbestos concerns against Northhampton County

LEHIGH VALLEY EXPRESS TIMES The Environmental Protection Agency has closed its investigation into Northhampton County's asbestos problems due to the death of its lead investigator, meaning the county will avoid the costly fines officials once feared. EPA Spokeswoman Donna Heron said Thursday the federal agency cannot proceed with its investigation after its lead inspector in the case died earlier this year of cancer. Without someone who oversaw the investigation first-hand, the agency does not have enough evidence to move forward. "It has become clear that trying to duplicate what was actually observed by our inspector is impossible to do. Without the inspector's testimony to corroborate the files, there is insufficient evidence to proceed with a formal complaint," she wrote in an email. County Executive John Stoffa welcomed the news, saying it was good for the county and taxpayers. The concerns over the public's health have always been treated seriously, he said, and the lack of a case is evidence the county was never a serious violator. "I think this is a vindication," Stoffa said. "If this had been that serious, they would have had a supervisor watching over the case." The EPA's choice not to move forward with the case means the agency will not officially state whether the county violated health codes. EPA officials investigated portions of Gracedale, the Northhampton County Courthouse and the Gov. Wolf building. The county spent more than \$390,000 cleaning and refurbishing the law library in the courthouse and a portion of the basement in Gracedale. A storage area for the district attorney's office in the courthouse's basement was also cleaned, but the cost was not immediately available. County Controller Stephen Barron and members of an employee safety team first reported concerns over the air quality in county-owned buildings to federal authorities in May 2011. At the time, Stoffa said fines from the federal government were likely as a result. However, the investigation was sidelined for months after the inspector handling the case became seriously ill. He died in May, according to Heron. Barron said Thursday the county was fortunate to avoid fines due to the inspector's untimely death. However, he noted a significant culture change within the administration since last spring. While in the past, the county has minimized exposure to carcinogens, it is now taking appropriate measures to ensure areas are not being contaminated, he said.

Local girls win environmental awards

NEWARK POST At the Delaware State Fair earlier this month, Governor Jack Markell, DNREC Secretary Collin O'Mara and U.S. EPA Region III Administrator Shawn M. Garvin announced three Delaware students – two of them from Newark – as the 2012 Young Environmentalists of the Year. The awards are presented each year to Delaware students that have worked to protect, restore or enhance the state's natural resources through environmental stewardship and innovative projects. The 2012 high-school winner is Melissa Matsanka, 17, of Newark, who will be a junior at St. Mark's High School this fall. She is working to earn her Girl Scout Gold Award by organizing and operating a recycling program at Holy Angels School. Her project involved implementing recycling at the school, educating fourth-, fifth- and sixth-grade students by developing and teaching lessons on recycling, and starting an after-school club of recycling leaders, the Angels Club for the Environment. The 2012 middle-school winner is Caitlin Aber, 12, of Newark, who will be in eighth grade at Holy Angels School this fall. Aber is a longtime 4-H Environmental Science Club member who participates in a variety of activities including water monitoring, wetland restoration and trash cleanup. She also makes bird and wildlife homes and feeders. This year, she made bee blocks – a bee house made from a block of natural wood with holes drilled in one side – and gave presentations on the importance of native bees.

Energy symposium touches on Act 13

WASHINGTON (Pa.) OBSERVER REPORTER The secretary of the state Department of Environmental Resources said Thursday he's confident the state Supreme Court will rule in favor of the municipal zoning provisions originally set forth in Act 13. The legislation, which covers development of Pennsylvania's Marcellus Shale strata, put limits on the powers of municipalities to regulate the booming natural gas exploration industry. Earlier this year, Commonwealth Court ruled the act's provisions for limiting local zoning regulations were unconstitutional. The ruling followed a suit filed by several municipalities, including Robinson, Mt. Pleasant, Cecil and Peters townships in Washington County, as well as South Fayette Township in Allegheny County and two other municipalities in Eastern Pennsylvania questioning the constitutionality of limiting local zoning ordinances.

PENNSYLVANIA

PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

Editorial: Electric cars on the ascent Imagine a car that consumes no oil, has no tailpipe, and can get you wherever you need to go without ever visiting a gas station. That's the promise of electric vehicles, which got a huge boost this week when the Obama administration announced that fuel-efficiency standards will be nearly doubled, to 54.5 miles per gallon by 2025. Pennsylvania drivers currently spend more than \$18 billion a year on gasoline. Oil consumed for gasoline and other uses produces more global-warming pollution than any other energy source, and oil emissions are our largest single source of smog, particulate pollution, and other toxins that cause thousands of asthma attacks and other respiratory problems every year. While the cost of gasoline has been rising, however, electric vehicle technology has been improving. Today's electric cars, equipped with powerful motors, smooth handling, and high-tech features, are designed for an exceptional driving experience. These vehicles are safe, too. The Nissan Leaf was the first all-electric vehicle to earn the Top Safety Pick rating from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, and the first to earn a five-star rating for overall safety from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Crab reef sculpture cracks in mishap (NJ) Marine biologist Chris Wojcik spent months building a 46-foot horseshoe crab replica, meant to function as an artificial reef off the New Jersey coast. The plan Thursday was to sink the anatomically proportionate concrete sculpture - and the 50-foot barge to which it was bolted - three miles east of Mantoloking in Ocean County. The work would rest on the ocean floor, providing an environment for lobsters, fish, and about 150 other species, according to the state Department of Environmental Protection, which gave the operation its approval. Wojcik's sculpture went down Thursday, though not according to plan.

PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE

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would those that provide significant economic benefits. Agency spokesman Kevin Sunday said the Governor's Action Team, which is involved in economic development efforts, could play a role in determining the job figures related to a project. He added that the agency is seeking feedback on that section in particular. The changes would streamline the review process for more than 240 different agency permits. Public comments will be accepted until Oct. 1, after which the agency will post its final rules. While the permit guidelines cover a wide swath of activities, the natural gas drilling industry has been particularly vocal about what it feels is a sluggish process. In a statement, Marcellus Shale Coalition president Kathryn Klaber referred to the proposed revisions as "common-sense efforts" and said they could help ensure that the state remains competitive. One environmental advocate who had been critical following the July executive order on the permitting changes, George Jugovic of PennFuture, said he had not yet reviewed the agency proposal late Thursday afternoon.

Miners say they were told to go to GOP rally After Murray Energy Corp. closed down mining activity Aug. 14 and mandated that employees attend the political rally -- which targeted Obama administration coal policies -- miners began complaining about it to a Wheeling, W. Va., radio station, saying they missed a day's pay because of the rally. The company is owned by Robert Murray, a vocal critic of Mr. Obama whose company has contributed more than \$900,000 to Republican candidates the past two years. Miners and their families began anonymously complaining about the directive to conservative WWVA-AM talk show host David Blomquist, telling him they feared losing their jobs if they did not attend. The complaints were further reported by the Cleveland Plain Dealer. Miners in work clothes stood behind the Republican presidential nominee as he blasted Mr. Obama's coal policies that day. The coal firm's executive vice president, Rob Moore, responded to the claims on Mr. Blomquist's show on Monday. "Attendance at the Romney event was mandatory but no one was forced to attend," Mr. Moore said. "... There were no consequences or repercussions taken against any employee who did not attend the Romney event."

Commentary: The weather and West Nile: Let's stop arguing over climate change and fight the virus The United States is in the midst of its worst West Nile outbreak ever. A major factor influencing the spread of this mosquito-borne illness is the weather. Yet that very assertion has triggered a misguided debate about climate change when the focus should be on mitigating the spread of this deadly virus. Weather's impact is clear. Warmer climates extend the geographic range of mosquitoes. Mild winters allow mosquitoes to repopulate more quickly in the spring. Higher temperatures make it so mosquitoes reach biting age sooner and speed up the multiplication of the virus inside of them. Humidity stimulates the mosquitoes to bite more. Heavy rains produce ample breeding grounds. Mosquitoes even do well in a drought. Droughts can leave standing pools of water and nutrient-rich water in storm drains and catch basins, which allow the mosquitoes to thrive. After a drought, they repopulate quicker than other insects (including their predators) and therefore can have free reign. Some claim that climate change is not occurring or, at most, that we are experiencing a normal cyclical increase in temperature. They have extended this line of reasoning to argue that climate change cannot be a factor in the West Nile outbreak.

Letter: Wind energy jobs The wind energy production tax credit, a federal policy that helps level the playing field with fossil fuels, has been a key driver in wind-industry job growth over the past decade but is set to expire this year. Congress must act! Generating wind power creates no emissions and uses no water. The wind power installed in Pennsylvania will avoid more than 1.25 million metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions annually. If the tax credit is not renewed, about half of all the 75,000 American jobs in the wind industry will be lost. Unfortunately, the major oil companies and others are working hard to influence Congress and to keep this clean, natural energy source from growing. If you care, call your representative in Congress and two senators and ask that they work to ensure the production tax credit is renewed.

Letter: Bike trail trials The tragic accidents on Penn Avenue have focused our attention on the dangers of cycling in Pittsburgh. Finger pointing on who is at fault has filled the PG's letters to the editor section. Too many drivers are not attentive to cyclists and too many cyclists are not following the rules of the road.

Drillers rattled as ethane, propane prices plunge The same hydrocarbons that have propped up oil and gas balance sheets for several months are starting to look less sturdy. Prices for ethane and propane -- both lucrative liquids that

are extracted alongside natural gas -- have fallen significantly over the past year as companies target the hydrocarbons and the high commodity prices they bring with them. Ethane in July cost about 31 cents per gallon, a drop of about 60 percent from one year ago and the steepest drop among the hydrocarbons extracted from the Marcellus Shale gas formation that underlies much of Pennsylvania. An unseasonably warm winter that reduced the need for heaters didn't help things, driving the price of propane down to 88 cents per gallon in July 2012 from the \$1.53 seen one year prior, according to figures at the country's main processing plant in Mont Belvieu, Texas. The propane market has endured sudden month-to-month plunges this year, with a 20 percent drop from April to May.

PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE REVIEW

Collier firm fined for razing buildings A judge on Thursday fined a Collier firm \$20,000 for demolishing two buildings at the former Iron City Brewery in Lawrenceville. District Judge Anthony M. Ceoffe found Collier Development, which owns the brewery site, in violation of city ordinances requiring permits and permission to demolish historic buildings. Pittsburgh has classified the brewery site a historic landmark.

Positive West Nile samples double Allegheny County health officials this year have collected 138 mosquito samples that tested positive for the deadly West Nile virus, the highest number ever. The high count — almost double the 70 positive samples found last year — is recorded at the period of summer when people are most vulnerable to getting the infection. “There is certainly potential for human illness. This is the peak time for human infection — late summer,” said Guillermo Cole, a spokesman for the county Health Department. No humans have been infected with West Nile in Western Pennsylvania. Fifteen people have tested positive for the virus in Pennsylvania — all in the eastern half of the state.

Western Pa. park groups to host meetings about tree pests The Allegheny County Parks Department, Citiparks and Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy will host informational meetings in September about oak wilt and the emerald ash borer. The meetings are free and open to homeowners, landscape professionals, municipal officials and anyone dealing with these problems. No registration is required. Sandy Feather of Penn State Cooperative Extension will discuss symptoms and controls for oak wilt and the emerald ash borer on Sept. 11 from 10 a.m. to noon at the Buffalo Inn, Buffalo Drive, in South Park. David A. Schmit from the state Bureau of Forestry will discuss oak wilt identification and controls on Sept. 12 from 6 to 7 p.m. at Riverview Park Activities Building, Perrysville and Riverview avenues. South Park Greenhouse Manager Denise Schreiber can be contacted at 412-835-1201 for more information

Sustainability Fair to be held in Connellsville Connellsville is hosting a sustainability fair on Sept. 8 and 9 in Yough River Park. Lindsay Baxter of the Pennsylvania Environmental Council is an organizer of the event. Funding for the fair has been provided through a grant from the West Penn Power Sustainable Energy Fund. “The fair is really being driven by a group of community volunteers. I’m involved through my partnership with the West Penn Power Sustainable Energy Fund for support with registration and things like that,” said Baxter.

PITTSBURGH BUSINESS TIMES

Marcellus Shale art: Rachel Sager Lynch's mosaics fuse nature, industry In the mind of Rachel Sager Lynch, Marcellus gas glistens through gold-leaf mosaic glass that lines a two-inch-thick half-pipe plunging through the layers of the earth. First clay, then sandstone, then coal, water, limestone and, finally — prolifically — shale. She’s an artist, not a driller, though there’s a parallel between her method and the process depicted in her art. It starts with a plan, a pipe curving into a horizontal trajectory on the canvas. The rest is about responding to the elements — working with the earth’s textures to get the maximum yield. Just as the gas industry has ...

Blog: DEP chief defends Marcellus zoning law A top state official defended the controversial Marcellus Shale zoning law in an appearance at a local energy conference. "I'm confident that the Supreme Court is going to make the right call," said Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection Secretary Michael Krancer at the energy forum "The Energy Industry — The Future" at Southpointe that was being held the same week as the Mylan Classic

golf tournament. An account of Krancer's speech appeared in the Observer-Reporter newspaper. The state Supreme Court is the next stage set for Act 13, which pits the Corbett administration against municipalities including Peters Township, South Fayette and others in a battle over the recently passed statewide zoning law. The plaintiffs won a battle earlier this summer in the Commonwealth Court of Pennsylvania but the administration has appealed.

LEHIGH VALLEY EXPRESS TIMES

EPA closes investigation into asbestos concerns against Northampton County The Environmental Protection Agency has closed its investigation into Northampton County's asbestos problems due to the death of its lead investigator, meaning the county will avoid the costly fines officials once feared. EPA Spokeswoman Donna Heron said Thursday the federal agency cannot proceed with its investigation after its lead inspector in the case died earlier this year of cancer. Without someone who oversaw the investigation first-hand, the agency does not have enough evidence to move forward. "It has become clear that trying to duplicate what was actually observed by our inspector is impossible to do. Without the inspector's testimony to corroborate the files, there is insufficient evidence to proceed with a formal complaint," she wrote in an email. County Executive John Stoffa welcomed the news, saying it was good for the county and taxpayers. The concerns over the public's health have always been treated seriously, he said, and the lack of a case is evidence the county was never a serious violator. "I think this is a vindication," Stoffa said. "If this had been that serious, they would have had a supervisor watching over the case." The EPA's choice not to move forward with the case means the agency will not officially state whether the county violated health codes. EPA officials investigated portions of Gracedale, the Northampton County Courthouse and the Gov. Wolf building. The county spent more than \$390,000 cleaning and refurbishing the law library in the courthouse and a portion of the basement in Gracedale. A storage area for the district attorney's office in the courthouse's basement was also cleaned, but the cost was not immediately available. County Controller Stephen Barron and members of an employee safety team first reported concerns over the air quality in county-owned buildings to federal authorities in May 2011. At the time, Stoffa said fines from the federal government were likely as a result. However, the investigation was sidelined for months after the inspector handling the case became seriously ill. He died in May, according to Heron. Barron said Thursday the county was fortunate to avoid fines due to the inspector's untimely death. However, he noted a significant culture change within the administration since last spring. While in the past, the county has minimized exposure to carcinogens, it is now taking appropriate measures to ensure areas are not being contaminated, he said.

WASHINGTON (PA) OBSERVER REPORTER

Energy symposium touches on Act 13 The secretary of the state Department of Environmental Resources said Thursday he's confident the state Supreme Court will rule in favor of the municipal zoning provisions originally set forth in Act 13. The legislation, which covers development of Pennsylvania's Marcellus Shale strata, put limits on the powers of municipalities to regulate the booming natural gas exploration industry. Earlier this year, Commonwealth Court ruled the act's provisions for limiting local zoning regulations were unconstitutional. The ruling followed a suit filed by several municipalities, including Robinson, Mt. Pleasant, Cecil and Peters townships in Washington County, as well as South Fayette Township in Allegheny County and two other municipalities in Eastern Pennsylvania questioning the constitutionality of limiting local zoning ordinances.

WNEP-TV SCRANTON

County Studies Look at Marcellus Shale Impacts Lycoming County is one step closer to deciding how to spend money it collects from the Marcellus Shale impact fee. By year's end, the entire county stands to receive about \$10 million from the gas industry. There were around 300 natural gas wells drilled in Lycoming County last year, according to a report from the county's planning department. With each well, and there will be more each year, county officials said there is a far-reaching impact. Now there is a clearer picture of what needs exist around Lycoming County after two studies were presented to county commissioners; one on housing and another on water and sewer. "The challenge really is how do we apply the Act 13 money to meet the needs?" questioned Christine Weigle. Weigle heads the Lycoming County Water and Sewer Authority which is branching out in the eastern part of the county. The move is to address needs that existed before the gas industry's arrival and ones that have come up since industry-related businesses have set up shop there, she said. "We need to respond to those needs by asking

for the money, we know it's going to be competitive. We're trying to bring cost-effective services," said Weigle. As the Marcellus Shale industry grows in Lycoming County, so do the needs associated with it. That includes better water pressure to businesses and homes, but there are other needs, like roads, bridges, even housing. At the YWCA of Williamsport, Mallory Weymer said the gas boom has created a shortage of affordable housing and that shortage is directly affecting shelter programs. The hope is to use a portion of impact fee money to help. "We do have 30 rooms we can house people in. But we're hoping to possibly expand to our basement where we used to have storage and to turn that into additional housing," said Weymer. Two more studies will be complete later this year, one on transportation and another on social justice and education. Then commissioners expect they will have the information they need to decide how to spend that impact fee money.

ERIE TIMES NEWS

Group names Presque Isle top boating, fishing park Presque Isle State Park was named one of the top eight state parks for boating and fishing in America. The Nature's Waterpark Showdown national competition was sponsored by the Recreational & Fishing Foundation and asked its fans to vote for the top parks on Facebook. Voters had 24 parks to choose from in the eight-week contest, said a news release. In addition to Presque Isle, the champions were: Lake Murray State Park in Oklahoma, Itasca State Park in Minnesota, Blue Spring State Park in Florida, El Dorado State Park in Kansas, Cave Lake State Park in Nevada, Fall Creek State Park in Tennessee and Wellington State Park in New Hampshire.

TOWANDA DAILY REVIEW

Gas law zoning ruling will be on merits, Senate leader suggests HARRISBURG - A top Senate Republican leader said Wednesday he isn't worried that a final court ruling on local zoning limits under the Marcellus Shale drillers impact fee law will be determined by partisan considerations. President Pro Tempore Joseph Scarnati, R-25, Jefferson County, said he expects the state Supreme Court, now divided 3-3 between elected Republicans and elected Democrats, will base its ruling on a legal interpretation of zoning laws. "I don't think the zoning issue is a partisan issue, whatsoever," added Scarnati. He described the state's highest court even when it was under 4-3 GOP control as having an "independent streak." Scarnati helped write the impact fee law enacted last February. He said the zoning provisions are designed to allow for consistent application statewide. The Supreme Court will hear an appeal of a recent Commonwealth Court ruling that struck down a provision in the law limiting the ability of municipalities to control the location of drilling activity. The lower court found the provision in Act 13 infringed on municipalities' due process rights by forcing them to allow incompatible land uses such as drilling rigs in zones they had kept apart from industrial activity. The Corbett administration has appealed the ruling saying the court's job is to pass judgment on the law's constitutionality, not its merits.

STATE IMPACT PENNSYLVANIA

DEP Issues Draft Permit Review Changes The Department of Environmental Protection says their proposed permit review process will encourage applicants to meet with DEP officials before applying, and is meant to stop wasting employee's time. DEP Secretary Michael Krancer says that about 40 percent of the permit applications it receives currently, are incomplete.

Could "Coal Gasification" Breathe Life Into Coal Industry? With the coal industry seemingly on the ropes, due largely to the Marcellus Shale-led domestic natural gas boom, there's been a lot of hand-wringing over the industry's future. Bloomberg News floats one way to tap into coal's resources while minimizing surface contaminants: it's called coal gasification. Proponents say the technique is a much cleaner way to turn coal seams into energy, but skeptics argue the process "has limited applicability," and has the potential to contaminate water supplies. How's this process work?

BINGHAMTON PRESS AND SUN BULLETIN

Northern Pa.'s natural gas production continues to rise Projections called for slowdown in the region. Bucking

projections that low natural gas prices might trigger a downturn, northern Pennsylvania's Marcellus Shale natural gas production continued to rise in the first half of 2012, according to the state's newly-released figures. Pennsylvania's 2,875 active natural gas wells produced 895 billion cubic feet of natural gas between January and June 2012, according to data recently released by the state's Department of Environmental Protection. Bradford and Susquehanna, located along the state's northern border with New York, were again the first- and second-most productive counties in the state. Bradford produced 235 billion cubic feet of natural gas, and Susquehanna produced 189 billion cubic feet of natural gas — collectively, enough to heat about 6 million homes for a year. Susquehanna was also home to eight of the 10 most-productive wells over the period, all owned by Cabot Oil & Gas, and located in Dimock, Springville and Auburn townships.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

WASHINGTON POST

GOP platform highlights the party's drastic shift on energy, climate issues Over the past four years, the Republican Party has undergone a fairly dramatic shift in its approach to energy and environmental issues. Global warming has disappeared entirely from the party's list of concerns. Clean energy has become an afterthought. Fossil fuels loom larger than ever. And one way to see this shift clearly is to compare the party's 2008 and 2012 platforms. It may seem difficult to believe now, but back in 2008, the Republican Party's platform (pdf) had a long and detailed section on "Addressing Climate Change Responsibly." Here's how it opened:

The same human economic activity that has brought freedom and opportunity to billions has also increased the amount of carbon in the atmosphere. While the scope and longterm consequences of this are the subject of ongoing scientific research, common sense dictates that the United States should take measured and reasonable steps today to reduce any impact on the environment. Those steps, if consistent with our global competitiveness will also be good for our national security, our energy independence, and our economy. The 2008 platform went on to call for "technology-driven, market-based solutions that will decrease emissions, reduce excess greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, increase energy efficiency, mitigate the impact of climate change where it occurs, and maximize any ancillary benefits climate change might offer for the economy."...Skip ahead to 2012, and the GOP platform takes a markedly different tone. That section devoted to climate change? Gone. Instead, the platform flatly opposes "any and all cap and trade legislation" to curtail greenhouse gases. It demands that Congress "take quick action to prohibit the EPA from moving forward with new greenhouse gas regulations." It criticizes the Obama administration's National Security Strategy for "elevat[ing] 'climate change' to the level of a 'severe threat' equivalent to foreign aggression." The platform even tosses in what appears to be a subtle swipe at climate scientists: Moreover, the advance of science and technology advances environmentalism as well. Science allows us to weigh the costs and benefits of a policy so that we can prudently deal with our resources. This is especially important when the causes and long-range effects of a phenomenon are uncertain. We must restore scientific integrity to our public research institutions and remove political incentives from publicly funded research.

Harbert says it's not a choice between energy and environment (video link) Karen Harbert, President and CEO of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Institute for 21st Century Energy, says debate shouldn't be about a choice between energy or the environment, we have to have both.

WTOP-RADO

Report: Susquehanna dams near sediment capacity BALTIMORE - The U.S. Geological Survey says reservoirs near the mouth of the Susquehanna are filling with sediment and storms are now washing more pollution into the Chesapeake Bay. USGS officials released a new report Thursday showing that the Conowingo Dam and other reservoirs that have trapped sediment and pollution are filling to capacity. And the report says the loss of that sediment trapping will make it more difficult to meet Chesapeake Bay restoration goals. That's because sediments harm water quality by clouding water and covering bay grasses, which are an important habitat for many species.

And they also carry pollutants that cause algae blooms which rob oxygen from bay water. The Susquehanna is the bay's largest tributary, accounting for about half of the fresh water entering the Chesapeake.

DELAWARE

WILMINGTON NEWS JOURNAL

State discovers human case of West Nile virus A 34-year-old Wilmington man infected while traveling for work is the state's first case of the West Nile virus this year, the Division of Public Health. He was apparently bitten by a mosquito harboring the virus, fell ill upon returning to the state, and is now hospitalized for the non-neuroinvasive form of the infection. People typically develop symptoms between three and 14 days after they are bitten, according to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

NEWARK POST

Local girls win environmental awards At the Delaware State Fair earlier this month, Governor Jack Markell, DNREC Secretary Collin O'Mara and U.S. EPA Region III Administrator Shawn M. Garvin announced three Delaware students – two of them from Newark – as the 2012 Young Environmentalists of the Year. The awards are presented each year to Delaware students that have worked to protect, restore or enhance the state's natural resources through environmental stewardship and innovative projects. The 2012 high-school winner is Melissa Matsanka, 17, of Newark, who will be a junior at St. Mark's High School this fall. She is working to earn her Girl Scout Gold Award by organizing and operating a recycling program at Holy Angels School. Her project involved implementing recycling at the school, educating fourth-, fifth- and sixth-grade students by developing and teaching lessons on recycling, and starting an after-school club of recycling leaders, the Angels Club for the Environment. The 2012 middle-school winner is Caitlin Aber, 12, of Newark, who will be in eighth grade at Holy Angels School this fall. Aber is a longtime 4-H Environmental Science Club member who participates in a variety of activities including water monitoring, wetland restoration and trash cleanup. She also makes bird and wildlife homes and feeders. This year, she made bee blocks – a bee house made from a block of natural wood with holes drilled in one side – and gave presentations on the importance of native bees.

DELAWARE CAPE GAZETTE

Bayard floods, but not for long Dewey Beach — A million-dollar drainage system in Dewey Beach malfunctioned during recent severe rains and thunderstorms. But town officials say the problem was remedied quickly enough to drain more than a foot of water from Bayard Avenue in less than two hours. Infrastructure committee Chairman Rick Judge said Bayard Avenue was under 14 inches of water Aug. 25. A \$900,000 project completed last year was designed to reduce flooding on the road. Town officials are still making payments on a \$480,000 loan from Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control to pay for the system. Judge said a lightning strike near the pump station caused the system to detect high voltage and automatically shut itself off. Judge said he went to the pump station and fixed the problem. "Within an hour, it was under control; within an hour and a half, it was dry," he said. Dewey Beach flooded, but so did Rehoboth Beach and Long Neck, Judge said. "Wilmington Avenue, Baywood, even Rehoboth Country Club was shut down for two days," he said. Judge said the pumps were not damaged and he plans to have a stronger surge protector installed so the pumps will not deactivate so easily in the future. He said the system would also be programmed to call three numbers automatically when it is deactivated: Dewey Beach Police, town maintenance and the company that maintains the pumps. Some residents say officials responded quickly enough to catch the problem before the rain caused any significant damage. Larry Killeen, president of Cajun Cove Homeowners Association, said he went to the pump station when the flooding started, and Judge was already working to fix the problem. "These people are just volunteers," he said.

Inland Bays Science Committee to discuss shellfish aquaculture Sept. 7 The potential ecological benefits of

shellfish aquaculture in the Inland Bays and the status of groundwater modeling in the watershed are on the agenda of the next Delaware Center for the Inland Bays Scientific & Technical Advisory Committee meeting at 9 a.m., Friday, Sept. 7, at the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control Lewes Field Station (next to the DNREC Boat Ramp) at 901 Pilottown Road. E.J. Chalabala, restoration coordinator, and Bart Wilson, science coordinator for the CIB, will present an update on the Inland Bays Shellfish Aquaculture Initiative, a stakeholder-based plan to explore the potential for shellfish aquaculture in the Inland Bays. Chalabala will discuss the role of the planning committee, the process of gathering stakeholder input, and the development of legislation that would allow for shellfish aquaculture in the Inland Bays. Wilson will discuss the role of spatial planning in developing potential sites for shellfish aquaculture and the process that is underway to identify and map potential conflicts and consider competing interests and concerns. Dr. Lisa Kellogg from the Virginia Institute of Marine Studies will discuss the role of shellfish in reducing nutrient levels, and present current research on the benefits of farm-raised shellfish in improving water quality. Also on the agenda, Dr. Holly Michaels of the University of Delaware Geosciences Department, will present findings from her ongoing studies monitoring groundwater flow, and nutrient levels in groundwater flowing into Indian River Bay. The Science and Technical Advisory Committee is a standing committee of the CIB Board of Directors. The public is welcome to attend these meetings. For more information, contact Sally Boswell, education and outreach coordinator at 302-226-8105 or go to www.inlandbays.org.

Letter: Relating history of clamming in the bays This is the first time I have felt compelled to respond to an article in the Gazette. However, after reading the current Barefootin' piece, setting the record and history straight on this issue is in order. My purpose is not to take sides on the current argument over the leasing of Rehoboth Bay and Indian River Bay for oyster aquaculture, but to relay the facts from the one person who was actually in the center of the previous controversy over bottom leasing. It was May 2, 1971, when Mr. Cropper had 1,500 acres in Indian River staked off as a lease he had acquired from the state. The lease was sectioned off in three blocks, and encompassed the productive bottom that Bob Dorman and other commercial clammers had been working for years. Clifford Copp was clamming for Bob at the time, but remained a bystander to events unfolding in the river since he worked in Rehoboth Bay.

WEST VIRGINIA

CHARLESTON GAZETTE

Blog: Obama MSHA: Standing up for coal miners We obviously hear a lot these days about how terrible the Obama administration is for coal miners and the coal industry. And goodness knows this blog hasn't always been that friendly to some of the things that the current U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration has done. (see [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#), for example).

CHARLESTON DAILY MAIL

Lack of rain makes August one of driest months in city CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- Unless the Charleston area sees a significant amount of rainfall today, August will go down in the history books as the third driest month in the Capital City since records have been kept. Only about .31 inches of rain has fallen in Charleston so far this month, said Joe Merchant, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service. And although there is a slight chance of rain tonight, it will be too little too late, he said. "We'd have to have a downpour, and it would have to happen right over Yeager Airport where we measure precipitation," Merchant said. Precipitation records for Charleston go back to the 1890s. The driest month on record for the city was in October 1897 when one weather observer measured .07 inches of rain, according to figures provided by the National Weather Service. Another weather observer measured zero precipitation that month, according to the figures. The second driest month was also in October 66 years later in 1963, when .09 inches of rain fell, according to the figures. The third driest month was in 1924 when .36 inches of rain fell in Charleston.

Top party members to skip Democratic National Convention CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- More than 100 West Virginia Democrats are expected to head to the Democratic National Convention next week in Charlotte, N.C. Famously absent will be U.S. Sen. Joe Manchin, Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin and U.S. Rep. Nick Rahall. Each say they have better things to do back in West Virginia. At least part of that may be avoiding the shadow of President Barack Obama. Sen. Jay Rockefeller is serving as the state Democratic Party delegation's honorary chairman next week. He is likely to cast the state delegation's votes for Obama and Vice President Joe Biden from the floor of the convention. Rockefeller and Rahall have endorsed Obama, while Tomblin and Manchin have declined to say for whom they will vote this fall. At this week's Republican National Convention in Tampa, Fla., Republican gubernatorial nominee Bill Maloney cast his party's votes on behalf of Mitt Romney. He did so wearing a coal miner's helmet. That enthusiasm so far hasn't helped him in polls that show him even less popular than Obama in the state.

ASSOCIATED PRESS (W. Va.)

Closure of 3 state coal-fired plants looms CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- Three coal-fired power plants in West Virginia will soon stop generating electricity under a plan by FirstEnergy Corp. to shutter some aging facilities because of new environmental regulations. Saturday will be the last day of power generation for FirstEnergy Corp.'s Albright, Rivesville and Willow Island power plants. FirstEnergy spokesman Mark Durbin tells The Times-West Virginian that some workers likely will remain on the job for a short period. They will deactivate the plants and take care of permits and environmental regulations. The plants employ a total 210 workers. Ohio-based FirstEnergy announced the closures in February and attributed them to new federal environmental regulations aimed at reducing emissions of mercury and other toxic pollution. Durbin said the company determined that retrofitting the plants to meet the new standards was not economically feasible. "It was in no reflection at all of the job that the employees were doing," Durbin said. FirstEnergy also plans to retire six coal-fired plants in Ohio, Pennsylvania and Maryland. Durbin said the West Virginia plants have contributed less than 1 percent of the company's electricity during the past three years. They served mostly as peaking facilities. Some employees were given the opportunity to work at other FirstEnergy operations. An enhancement retirement option was offered to workers who qualified. Severance packages were offered to the remaining employees. "We've actually worked very hard to try to take care of our employees as best as we could," Durbin said. He said many of the workers have taken other jobs with the company or the retirement option.

Federal agency helps miners fight unsafe conditions ARLINGTON, Va. — Federal regulators are helping miners fight suspensions, discharges or other adverse actions after they file mine safety discrimination complaints. The Mine Safety and Health Administration says it's educating miners about their health and safety rights. The agency also is taking legal action to get miners who file complaints temporarily reinstated to their jobs. MSHA says miners' fears of retaliation and discrimination were revealed during congressional hearings following the Upper Big Branch Mine explosion in West Virginia that killed 29 workers in 2010. MSHA director Joe Main says in a news release that miners have a right to identify hazardous conditions and to refuse to work in such conditions without fear of retaliation or discrimination.

MARYLAND

BALTIMORE SUN

License denied for proposed Calvert Cliffs nuclear reactor Atomic Safety and Licensing Board cites company's foreign ownership. Federal regulators denied a license Thursday to the French-controlled company for a proposed third nuclear reactor at the Calvert Cliffs nuclear power plant in Southern Maryland, giving the company 60 days to find a U.S. partner.

State levies fines against private, public entities for pollution violations Lehigh Cement plant in Union Bridge pays \$50,000 for excessive emissions three years ago. Environmental laws do get enforced, however slowly at times. The Maryland Department of the Environment announced Wednesday it had taken action against about 18 individuals, companies and local governments for alleged violations of the state's laws governing lead paint and air and water pollution.

Study finds Conowingo Dam losing ability to prevent bay pollution Susquehanna River flushed record sediment, phosphorus into Chesapeake last year. Now it's official: A report released today (8/30) finds the Conowingo Dam is losing its ability to prevent pollution from reaching the Chesapeake Bay.

SALISBURY DAILY TIMES

Ocean Downs seeks to replace septic OCEAN PINES -- Assateague Coastkeeper Kathy Phillips can't say exactly what caused the foul smell and elevated levels of sewage-loving bacteria in Turville Creek during a handful of days earlier this month. But of this, she is certain: The waterway would be much healthier without the septic tanks at Ocean Downs and the homes along Gum Point Road. In that regard, local officials and environmentalists like Phillips are rooting for the racetrack and casino's latest construction proposal: a 6-inch-wide pipe that will carry sewage to a wastewater plant in Ocean Pines. Like many rural Maryland properties, the venue uses a septic system and drain field to treat its wastewater. But its demand far outpaces most; last year, Ocean Downs drew 77,000 visitors. "The racetrack and casino are right there on the water," said Worcester County Commissioner Judy Boggs, whose district includes the facility. "And with the horses and everything else there and the potential for a theater and the bowling alley, it's the worst place possible for a septic (system)."

Peacocks may steal limelight at Derby CRISFIELD -- For the 65th year in a row, Crisfield will celebrate its roots as the "Seafood Capital of the World" when the National Hard Crab Derby kicks off this weekend. But this year's three-day homage to the Chesapeake Bay blue crab will also recognize some recent "come-heres" to the city -- three peacocks that have been roaming the streets for the past few months. The birds have been such a hit, that a local resident who wants to remain anonymous has agreed to don a peacock costume and march in Saturday morning's parade on Main Street, said Leslie Wilson, who has been busy sewing the outfit out of a blue sequined fabric. "It will be gaudy and gorgeous," she said.

Local fish farm highlights tour by state delegation QUINBY -- Dr. Clarke J. Morton had a business idea while living on the West Coast and his research led him to the Eastern Shore as the best location to build that idea into a business -- fish farming. "The water site was really important -- that is what makes the Eastern Shore a prime location to do aquaculture in the United States," said Morton, owner of Mid-Atlantic Aquatic Technology in Quinby, saying one of the main things needed in order to grow fish is to have clean water. Morton noted that most of the coast is developed, and the Eastern Shore is unique with not many such areas to be found on the country's coasts.

CHARLOTTESVILLE DAILY PROGRESS

VDOT releases draft environmental assessment for Western Bypass The Virginia Department of Transportation has published a key document required before the Federal Highway Administration can authorize design and construction of the Western Bypass of U.S. 29. To comply with the National Environmental Policy Act, VDOT officials have written a 62-page environmental assessment that examines what changes have occurred since 2003, when the federal government last issued an approval for the 6.2 mile four-lane highway. "The preparation of this EA is a continuation of the NEPA process that was initiated on this project in the late 1980s," reads the document's introduction. "It does not represent an initiation of that NEPA process anew." The bypass project was first conceived in the late 1970's and the Commonwealth Transportation Board selected the current alignment in November 1990. After the FHWA issued a "finding of no significant impact," the Southern Environmental Law Center filed a lawsuit against the FHWA alleging violations of NEPA. A judge sided with the FHWA on most of

the counts, but ordered the agency to complete a supplementary environmental impact statement. After that was completed and approved, the FHWA issued another approval in September 2003. However, the Charlottesville-Albemarle Metropolitan Planning Organization issued a resolution blocking any further funding for the road. That decision was reversed in July 2011. Soon afterwards, the FHWA directed VDOT to perform a new environmental assessment. VDOT officials begin the document by stating the road is needed to address congestion on existing U.S. 29. "2011 daily volumes on Route 29 exceed 60,000 just north of Hydraulic Road and 54,000 just south of the South Fork Rivanna Reservoir," it reads. "There are 13 signalized intersections and 10 un-signalized intersections within this 3.5 mile section of Route 29." The document cites a 2012 traffic model generated by the MPO that forecasts existing U.S. 29 will have a daily traffic volume of 84,000 vehicles in 2040. Using the same data, it claims that 28 percent of that amount will be diverted to the bypass if it is built. Section 3 of the EA analyzes regulatory and land use changes that have occurred since 2003 to determine whether they would mean additional impacts from the roadway. Since then, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has updated its National Ambient Air Quality Standards for ozone, fine particulate matter, nitrogen dioxide and lead. However, the authors of the EA claim this is not a concern. "The project is located in a region that has not been designated nonattainment for any of these new standards," reads the EA. "Continuing improvements in vehicle and fuel technology and resulting cleaner emissions will more than offset adverse effects in volumes of vehicles." The MPO and the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors held several public hearings after the project was revived last summer. The EA addresses many concerns expressed in those forums.

ASSOCIATED PRESS (Md.)

Report: Susquehanna dams near sediment capacity BALTIMORE (AP) — The U.S. Geological Survey says reservoirs near the mouth of the Susquehanna are filling with sediment and storms are now washing more pollution into the Chesapeake Bay. USGS officials released a new report Thursday showing that the Conowingo Dam and other reservoirs that have trapped sediment and pollution are filling to capacity. And the report says the loss of that sediment trapping will make it more difficult to meet Chesapeake Bay restoration goals. That's because sediments harm water quality by clouding water and covering bay grasses, which are an important habitat for many species. And they also carry pollutants that cause algae blooms which rob oxygen from bay water. The Susquehanna is the bay's largest tributary, accounting for about half of the fresh water entering the Chesapeake.

Maryland reports first West Nile virus death

MISCELLANEOUS

BNA DAILY ENVIRONMENT REPORT

USGS Says Nutrient-Laden Sediment Behind Susquehanna Dams Threatens Restoration Efforts Efforts to restore the Chesapeake Bay by 2025 face a major threat from nutrient-rich sediment that is building up behind three dams on the Susquehanna River, just above the bay, according to an Aug. 30 study by the U.S. Geological Survey. The three reservoirs are nearing capacity, and the dams' ability to trap sediment appears to be eroding. As a result, large storms are delivering increasingly more suspended sediment and nutrients to the bay, USGS said in announcing the study. The Environmental Protection Agency, other federal agencies, and the six states sharing the 41 million-acre Chesapeake Bay watershed are striving to cut nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment loading to sustainable levels, under a mandatory plan established in late 2010 (249 DEN A-4, 12/30/10). "The upstream reservoirs have served previously to help reduce nutrient pollutant loads to the Chesapeake Bay by trapping sediment and the pollutants attached to them behind dams," USGS Director Marcia McNutt said in a statement.

However, the reservoirs are now nearing their capacity to contain the sediment and have become much less effective at preventing nutrient-rich sediments from reaching the bay, McNutt said. "Further progress in meeting the goals for improving water quality in the Chesapeake will be more difficult to achieve as a result."

Obama Calls for 50 Percent Increase in Combined Heat, Power by 2020 An executive order signed by President Obama calls for increasing the use of combined heat and power by 50 percent by 2020, shining a spotlight on a “forgotten” energy resource that involves using heat produced during electricity generation and other industrial processes. In addition to establishing a national goal of deploying 40 more gigawatts of combined heat and power from industrial sources in less than a decade, the executive order requires federal agencies to coordinate with other parties to identify and encourage best practice policies for industrial energy efficiency and combined heat and power.

States Back Continued SRF Support for Green Infrastructure Projects The Environmental Council of the States adopts a resolution that reaffirms its support for ongoing federal assistance through the state revolving fund program to finance green infrastructure projects by wastewater and drinking water utilities. The resolution also makes it clear that states should be given the responsibility to allocate the clean water and drinking water state revolving funds based on the “individual needs of each state and territory.” ECOS adopts the resolution to show that states support efforts by wastewater and drinking water utilities to lower their energy and water costs.

California Tests Allowance Auction for Cap-and-Trade Program The California Air Resources Board tests the allowance auction designed for the state's greenhouse gas emissions cap-and-trade program. While the real auction is still months away, the trial run offers the state's major sources of greenhouse gases a chance to learn how the system will work and gives regulators an opportunity to test the system. CARB Chairman Mary Nichols tells BNA she is “delighted that everything so far shows that the practice auction went well.”

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Isaac leaves a soggy mess in Louisiana NEW ORLEANS — Isaac crawled into the nation's midsection early Friday, leaving a soggy mess in Louisiana. Neighborhoods were underwater, and many homes that stayed dry didn't have lights, air conditioning or clean water. It will be a few days before the soupy brown water recedes and people forced out of flooded neighborhoods can return home. And the damage may not be done. Officials were pumping water from a reservoir to ease the pressure behind an Isaac-stressed dam in Mississippi on the Louisiana border. In Arkansas, power lines were downed and trees knocked over as Isaac moved north into the state. The earthen dam on Lake Tangipahoa could unleash a 17-foot flood crest downstream in Louisiana if it were to give way, which prompted evacuations in small towns and rural areas Thursday. Officials plan to punch a hole in the dam to release excess water in a controlled fashion but were waiting for daylight Friday to decide exactly where and when, said Donnie Hodges with the Pike County, Miss., Office of Civil Defense. New Orleans, spared any major damage, lifted its curfew and returned to its usual liveliness, although it was dampened by heavy humidity.

GREENWIRE

EPA releases permit allowing upgrades at century-old Capitol Power Plant A plan to overhaul the power plant that heats the Capitol took a step forward yesterday as U.S. EPA came out with a proposed permit that would encourage the use of natural gas at the 102-year-old facility. The Capitol Power Plant has not generated electricity in 60 years, but the Architect of the Capitol aims to change that by turning it into a cogeneration facility. Such a plant burns fuel for electricity and uses the leftover heat to keep buildings warm in the winter and cool in the summer, saving money and cutting pollution by reducing the amount of energy that goes to waste. The draft air pollution permit released yesterday would help clear the way for the project by relaxing some of the stricter permitting requirements at the plant. In exchange, the facility would be subject to “plantwide applicability limits” -- stricter caps on emissions of greenhouse gases, nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter. The project must still get other permits from the District Department of the Environment, but the approval shows the push by the administration to make greater use of natural gas and cogeneration, which is also called combined heat and power. Kathleen Cox, associate director of permits and air toxics at EPA's Region 3 office in Philadelphia, said the permit would theoretically allow the plant to burn either coal or natural gas, but using gas would allow the plant to run for more hours. “How they do that is up to them and up to the District,” she said. The power plant, which stands just a few blocks away from

the offices of congressmen, primarily burned coal in its seven boilers until 2009, when the office announced plans to switch to natural gas. With federal agencies under orders from the White House to trim their energy use and gas cheap thanks to the recent boom in domestic drilling, Architect of the Capitol Stephen Ayers has pushed further in that direction Ayers has said that the cogeneration project will provide 18 megawatts of electricity while reducing the plant's energy use by 7.1 percent. It offers a "very cost-effective payback for Congress," he wrote this spring in the journal of the International District Energy Association, which represents companies that use combined heat and power.